Elites in the Policy Process. by Robert Presthus
Review by: Paul C. Buchanan
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The second and third sections contain many examples of group interactions or discussions between Argyris and members of the system. Argyris expressed some concern over the inclusion of so much verbatim dialogue, and I shared these concerns after reading about half the book. Then I realized that this is one of the few sources on consultation which provides raw data for influence-oriented events, allowing me and other readers to make inferences and interpretations that might or might not be the same as the author's.[1]

I admire his willingness to provide readers with the same data he used, thus allowing his judgments to be compared with their own. These examples will alone be worth the price of the book—and this is in no way intended to diminish Argyris' own ideas.

My main qualification about the book has to do with the emphasis on verbal interaction as the description of the system and what happens in it. Argyris makes many of his inferences based on these interactions, whereas I would have found it helpful to see a wider range of patterns included: where events take place, the relative frequency of certain types of meetings over a crucial period, the number of people that would have had to be influenced in order for a pattern to change, and so on.

Although Argyris says at the beginning that such data as age of the organization, structure, size, and location are not relevant to his purpose, I would have found this and the above information very useful as a context for—and part of—the living system he describes. I appreciate the problems around anonymity, but some of these structural features are undoubtedly helping to determine the dynamics that he observes; and a different-sized newspaper in a different region might well have a different pattern of blocks to self-renewing change.

Overall, I found the book to be quite provocative. I suspect that it will have several lives, as the different audiences discover its usefulness at different times. It needs to be explored and experimented with, much like the living system it describes.

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Argyris, Chris
1967 Management and Organization Development: The Path from Xa to Yb. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Elites in the Policy Process.

Robert Presthus. Cambridge: University Press, 1974. 525 pp. $19.50.

This book presents the findings from a five-year study of directors of interest groups (lobbyists), and their interactions with government officials at the national and state (provincial) levels in Canada and the United States. It provides a wealth of information and ideas of interest to students of the political process and sheds much light on issues of concern to citizens.

As the author points out, there has been little empirical research concerning lobbyists or concerning comparative politics. This study begins to fill these gaps: ''its character is empirical, exploratory and tentative,'' (p. 457). Its purposes were to describe and explain (a) the structure, process, and political effectiveness of interest groups, (b)

[1] Another of these few sources is Argyris' (1967) book, Management and Organization Development: The Path from Xa to Yb.

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the social backgrounds and political values of interest group directors, legislators, and senior bureaucrats (called the political élites), (c) the frequency and content of their interaction, and (d) the influence of lobbyists upon legislators and bureaucrats (p. 40). The descriptive goals were well attained; the explanatory ones not so well.

The book opens with a lengthy (39 pages) yet highly generalized review of selected aspects of United States and Canadian political cultures which, along with some theories, provide a basis for formulating—loosely—some cross-cultural hypotheses. This is followed by a presentation of the theoretical concepts used: interaction theory (after Homans), élite accommodation (Lijphart), and structural-functional analysis. Methodology is explained briefly in the text and more fully in two appendices—which include the questionnaires used.

Part 2 presents the findings regarding the structure and function of interest groups, along with much explanatory and integrative information (35 tables in a total of 166 pages). In Part 3 are the findings relevant to interaction patterns and the process of accommodation, again with much commentary and contextual information (26 tables and 85 pages). The expected and actual findings are in Part 4, along with commentary regarding the degree of similarity in status, values, and perceptions of the three élites—lobbyists, legislators, and bureaucrats. In Part 5 (10 pages) the author reviews his findings regarding associations between measures of the behavior of lobbyists and the political culture in each of the two countries, and he comments insightfully on the costs of the prevailing system of interest group politics.

To obtain the most important information contained in this book requires much effort, a condition which could have been less with more careful editing. The rewards are great, however, because the topic is important and timely, because the author utilizes interesting theory, and especially because empirical information is provided on a large number of issues from a large and well-selected set of samples. Interviews of from one to one and one-half hours each were conducted by graduate students with random samples of from 34 to 303 members of interest group directors, legislators, and senior level bureaucrats in national government and in two states (provinces) of each of the two countries—from a total of 2,400 people. All three groups at each level of government provided information about their own background, their own political values, and their attitudes toward and perception of lobbyists. Lobbyists and bureaucrats were asked to describe and answer questions about a recent case of lobby-government interaction, and legislators and bureaucrats were asked a large number of questions about their interactions with lobbyists. The book reports information on each of these topics.

But several problems arise. One concerns the information provided relative to how the data were analysed. The reader is simply informed (p. 476) that use was made of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences "which met most of our needs" (p. 476). By writing to the author, I learned that the package is available in a paper-back volume. I think that in a book where empirical data and the testing of relationships are such important parts of its value, information regarding data analysis merits higher priority than it is given here.

Secondly, the reader is informed (p. 476) that cluster analysis was used in devising indices of variables; yet, no information is provided regarding the degree of correlation among items in these indices or about how the indices were constructed. Furthermore, single items, rather than indices, were frequently used as measures (pp. 154, 256), tactics of, and services provided by, interest groups.

A third problem is unexplained variation in the measures used in studying two of the major constructs in the study (influence or effectiveness and legitimacy). For example, in tables involving legitimacy

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one set of questions is used in one table and another set in another table, raising the question of whether they are used selectively in such a way as to optimize the expected relationship. Furthermore, a total of seven different questionnaire items was used at various times to measure legitimacy (see pp. 302–308 and 324), sometimes one alone and sometimes several, and without explanation of how they were combined to form one index. Specifically, legitimacy is defined as "the translation of power into authority" (pp. 45 and 302). The items used as measures of legitimacy deal—

(1.) with perceived reliability of the lobbyist described (p. 305) as "the most unambiguous criterion of legitimacy"
(2.) with how legislators and bureaucrats feel about sharing with lobbyists a role in determining the legal requirements under which their professional groups operate,
(3.) with whether legislators consider the activities of lobbyists as improper pressures,
(4.) with whether the activities of lobbies are contrary to public interest,
(5.) with whether legislators and bureaucrats view lobbyists as competent professionals who know their business, and
(6.) with the appropriateness of methods used by lobbyists (in the case studies described by bureaucrats).

Such variety in items treated as measures of one variable raises questions regarding the meaningfulness (construct validity) of the variable.

Finally, how Presthus' concept of legitimacy was derived from Homans' (1961) interaction theory is not clear. So far as I can determine, Homans does not use legitimacy as a concept. He does use authority, which is included in Presthus' definition of legitimacy, but he defines it in terms of the number of others a person is able to influence (Homans, 1961: 286), thus making it tautologous to treat influence and legitimacy as separate variables as Presthus does.

Perhaps more would have been learned about interest groups and their role in government had Presthus used his vast knowledge of the field, plus some theories, as bases for constructing his questionnaire, and then factor analysed the responses to obtain a check on the extent to which the concepts which he intended to measure turned up as meaningful ones in the empirical data. Where they did not, either more work could be done to construct operational measures of meaningful constructs required by the theory, or the theory could be changed. Either way, a solid base would have been established for further study of important issues. Since the data for carrying out these steps exist and can be made available by the author—as I learned in contacting him—it seems reasonable to expect that the valuable mine of information generated in this study will yet yield more than is presented in this book.

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